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Fayun's View of the *Lotus Sūtra*

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The Problem

This paper considers Fayun's 法雲 (467–529) view of the *Lotus Sūtra* using his *Fahua yiji* 法華義記. Fayun was very famous for his scholarship of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the Liang Dynasty.¹ With the exception of fragments from various *Lotus Sūtra* commentaries discovered at Dunhuang, the *Fahua yiji* is the next oldest commentary after the earliest surviving commentary, i.e. the *Miaofa lianhua jing shu* 妙法蓮華經疏 of Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (ca. 355–434). Such as Daosheng's, Fayun's commentary is on the *Lotus Sūtra* in twenty seven chapters, which does not include the “Devadatta” chapter. Even though it is a record of Fayun's discourses on the *Lotus Sūtra*, which was recorded by his disciple, it is not simply a verbatim record of Fayun's lectures. In fact, one can detect traces of where the disciple introduced and critiqued alternative interpretations in an attempt at substantial enhancement of Fayun's exegesis.² As the text *Fahua yiji* was written by a disciple and there is a possibility that its formation was completed after Fayun's death, we cannot establish the lower limit of its formation any earlier than the date of Fayun's death. Therefore, we do not know precisely the date of its formation. As criticism of Fayun's interpretations of the *Lotus Sūtra* is seen often in the *Fahua xuanlun* 法華玄論, which Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) wrote when he stayed at Jiexiang Monastery 嘉祥寺 in Kuaiji 會稽 of Shaoxing 紹興 country of Zhejiang 浙江 province, it is obvious that the *Fahua yiji* was composed earlier than the *Fahua xuanlun*.³ In China the *Fahua yiji* was not so widely read after Zhiyi 智顗 and Jizang

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¹ See the first fascicle of the *Fahua xuanlun*, where it states, “When it came to the beginning of the Liang Dynasty, the three great masters who were erudite scholars became very famous in the society at that time and interpreted many sūtras, extensively collecting *abhidharma* treatises and the *Satyasiddhi-sāstra* (*Chengshi lun* 成實論). [Zhizang 智藏 of] Kaishan 開善 Monastery gained prominence for the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and [Sengmin 僧旻 of] Zhuangyan 莊嚴 Monastery acquired a reputation for the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* 十地經 and the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* 勝鬘經, while [Fayun 法雲 of] Guangzhai 光宅 Monastery had no equal in his time [in his expertise on] the *Lotus Sūtra*” (T no. 1720, 34. 363c17–20). Also see the fascicle 1B of the *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義, where it states, “The world regarded [the interpretation on the *Lotus Sūtra* of Fayun of] Guangzhai as supreme among many interpretations from ancient times to the present. Looking at the way scholars in the southern district interpreted Mahāyāna [sūtras], they accepted the exegeses of Sengzhao 僧肇 and Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什. Sengzhao and Kumārajīva usually took the stance of the pervasive teaching (*tongjiao* 通教). In the case of [Fayun of] Guangzhai's interpreting subtleness, can his interpretation go far [from their interpretations]? By criticizing him first, the others will be under the influence [of the criticism here]...” (T no. 1716, 33. 691c19–22).

² See Hiroshi Kanno, “*Hokkegiki ni okeru kōgisha Hōun to hitsurokusha*” in *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1994, pp. 142–150).

³ The period when Jizang stayed at the Jiexiang Monastery in Kuaiji was from 589 to 597. The Chen Dynasty

had criticized Fayun, and it seems to have been lost in the Tang and Song Dynasties. Fortunately, Hōtan 鳳潭 (1659–1738) of the Japanese Kegon 華嚴 school published a version of the text in 1696 that was transmitted to Japan, so we now have the text of the eight volumes of the *Fahua yiji* that Hōtan published.

Even though only the *Fahua yiji* is extant among Fayun's large works, his very short essay concerning the issue of whether or not the soul survives death is preserved in *Hongming ji* 弘明集⁴ and his essays concerning the meaning of the two truths and *dharma-kāya* are preserved in the *Guanghongming ji* 廣弘明集.⁵ Also the *Fahua yiji* referred to commentarial works such as the *Da ban niepan yiji*⁶ 大般涅槃義記 and the *Niepan yiji*⁷ 涅槃義記. They might have been Fayun's commentary on the Mahāyāna *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, which is not extant. As for the rest, the biography of Fayun in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 states that he wrote the forty-two volume *Chengshi lun yishu* 成實論義疏, which is also not extant.⁸

I will now take up a few issues concerning the *Lotus Sūtra* in Fayun's biography. To begin with, the biography states that when at the age of thirty Fayun first gave a lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* at the Miaoyin 妙音 Monastery, the audience gathered like the sea and was jam-packed in the hall. His explanation in response to the capacity of the people in the audience was like a swift wind and he refuted opponents with a well-placed lance. It is said that he had no equals in his time in terms of his wonderful lectures on sūtras.⁹

Further, when Fayun gave a lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra* at a certain temple, it is reported that heavenly flowers quickly filled the sky like flying snow, fell to the floor of the hall, rose into the sky again, and then disappeared after his lecture. This event is recounted at the end of Fayun's biography.¹⁰ This supernatural phenomenon seems to be connected to the fact that people of that time called him the "illusion-making monk." Also his biography introduces a monk who had a dream that Fayun had given a lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra* at the time of the past Buddha Sun Moon Bright, who appears in the "Introduction" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.¹¹ This shows the close relationship between Fayun and the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Fayun's main foci of research were the *Chengshi lun*, the Mahāyāna *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*. He became especially well known for his lectures on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Since his lectures are recorded as the *Fahua yiji*, I will clarify his view of the *Lotus Sūtra* from the viewpoints of analytic division, doctrinal classification, the one vehicle, and the impermanence of Buddha-body, using the

collapsed in 589 and Jizang moved to Huiji Daochang 慧日道場 in Yangzhou 揚州 province accepting the invitation from the King Guang 廣 of Jin 晉 (Yangdi 煬帝). See Hirai Shun'ei, *Hokke genron no chūshaku teki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1987, pp. 15–16).

⁴ See the *Hongming ji* 10 (T no. 2102, 52. 60b).

⁵ See the *Guanghong ming ji* 21 (T no. 2103, 52. 247b-249c, *ibid.*, 250c-251a).

⁶ See the *Fahua yiji* vol. 1 (T no. 1715, 33. 574a17).

⁷ See the *Fahua yiji* vol. 4 (*ibid.*, 619c6).

⁸ See the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* vol. 5 (T no. 2060, 50. 464a26–28). As for the forty-two volumes of the *Chengshi lun yishu*, Wang Zheng has alternatively suggested that Fayun did not write the forty-two volumes of commentary on the *Chengshi lun*, but wrote a kind of encyclopedia of Buddhism composed of forty-two volumes. See Wang zheng, "Jōjitsuron shi toshitenō Kōtakuji Hōun ni kansuru ichikōsatsu: Chūganronsho no inyō wo tegakari ni," in *Higashi ajia bukkyō kenkyū* 12 (2014, pp. 49–68).

⁹ See T no. 2060, 50. 464a2–8.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 465a2–4.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 465a10–11.

Fahua yiji as our basic source.

1. The Analytic Division of the *Lotus Sūtra*

Upon reading the *Fahua yiji*, we can quickly find that Fayun's analytic breakdown of the text of the *Lotus Sūtra* is very detailed. He breaks the sūtra's contents down into three main parts. In the first level division, he separates the text into the sections of "preface," "main discourse," and "dissemination." The preface means the "Introduction" chapter; the main discourse covers the fourteen and a half chapters from the "Skillful Means" chapter to the verses of measuring 格量偈 benefits (T no. 262, 9. 44c18) of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter; the dissemination section covers eleven and a half chapters from the prose sentences after the verses of measuring benefits to the end of the text.

In the second-level breakdown, he structures the three main divisions into two each. The preface is divided into the common preface and the specific preface and the main discourse is divided into the meaning of cause and the meaning of effect, while the dissemination section is divided into sections of practicing oneself and teaching others.

In the third-level breakdown, he divides the common preface and the specific preface into five units each, and divides the meaning of cause and the meaning of effect of the main discourse into four units each, while he divides both the section of practicing oneself and that of teaching others into five units each. Therefore, there are twenty-four units in all. We need not discuss the actual range of the second and the third-level divisions here.

The further detailed breakdown is shown in the passage-by-passage explanation of the *Fahua yiji*. Being composed of some twenty thousand characters, Daosheng's exegesis on the *Lotus Sūtra* is quite short and so a detailed breakdown of the text of the *Lotus Sūtra* is of course not shown.¹² It is necessary to conduct rather precise research on the text of the *Lotus Sūtra* to provide a detailed analytic division of the entire text. The *Fahua wenju* 法華文句 criticized Fayun's analytical division for being overly detailed.¹³ According to my comparative research among the *Fahua yiji*, the *Fahua yishu* by Jizang, and the *Fahua wenju* concerning the parsing of the parable of the wealthy man and his poor son in the "Belief and Understanding" chapter, however, I clarified that the *Fahua yishu* and the *Fahua wenju* are significantly influenced by the *Fahua yiji* in terms of the analytical divisions. The segmentation of the former two texts is more detailed than that of the latter text.¹⁴

2. Fayun's Doctrinal Classification and his Location of the *Lotus Sūtra*

Jizang and Zhiyi pointed out that adoption of Huiguan's 慧觀 (dates unknown) "five-period classification" spread during North-South Dynasties Period and Fayun also adopted it.¹⁵ Even

¹² See Hiroshi Kanno, "Myōhōrengekyōsho ni okeru dōshō no kyōtenchūshaku no hōhō" in *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū* (*ibid.*, pp. 69–78, especially pp. 70–71).

¹³ See the fascicle 1 of the *Fahua wenju* (T no. 1718, 34. 1c15–16).

¹⁴ See Hiroshi Kanno, "Hokekyō shingehon no hiyu kaishaku to kyōhan shisō" in *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū* (*ibid.*, pp. 653–826).

¹⁵ The fascicle 10A of the *Fahua xuanyi* states that Sengrou 僧柔, Huici 慧次 and Huiguan categorized the gradual teaching 漸教 into five teachings: the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics 有相教, the formless teaching 無相教, the teaching that extols and disregards, censures and praises 褒貶抑揚教, the teaching of equal reversion 同歸教 and the teaching of the eternal abiding 常住教. This is the so-called five-period classification, which was adopted by Zhizang 智藏 and Fayun (See T no. 1716, 33. 801b4–6). Also, Jizang's *Fahua xuanlun* vol. 2 states that Fayun adopted the five-period classification (See T no. 1720, 34. 372a17–20). Jizang's *Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義 (See T no. 1852, 45. 5b3–14) also introduced Huiguan's five-

though we can glean the content of Huiguan's five-period classification indirectly on the basis of materials like Jizang's *Sanlun xuanyi*, there is no evidence that Huiguan definitely advocated a five-period taxonomy. As for the five-period classification that was introduced by the materials earlier than those of Jizang and Zhiyi, I have studied the doctrinal classification of Sengliang 僧亮 (dates unknown) and Sengzong 僧宗 (438–496) in the *Da ban niepan jing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解.¹⁶ As pointed out by Jizang and Zhiyi, Fayun had some relationship with Sengzong¹⁷ and the *Fahua yiji* was influenced by the five-period classification.

I will now consider Fayun's doctrinal classification and his location of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

There are elegant passages which explain Fayun's doctrinal classification at the beginning of the *Fahua yiji* as a lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra*. This can indeed be called the first reasonable attempt to locate the *Lotus Sūtra* within the instructional content of Śākyamuni Buddha's career. Its main points are as follows.¹⁸

When appearing in this Sahā-world, Śākyamuni Buddha first tried to enable sentient beings to awaken from their long dream and become buddhas. However, as their past good causes were weak, their faculties for receiving the Mahāyāna teachings were obstructed and their eyes of wisdom were covered; he could not immediately expound "the great principle of cause and effect of the one vehicle." This being the case, he had no choice but to move to Mrgadāva and expound the three vehicles. Based on the principle of cause and effect, these three vehicles refer to three causes such as *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*, while the three effects are *arhat*, *pratyekabuddha*, and Buddha. Next, he clarified the three causes and three effects by expounding the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* to mature the salvific faculties of sentient beings. The salvific faculties of sentient beings to accept Mahāyāna Buddhism are put in motion through such long teachings, and he could expound the *Lotus Sūtra* in Rājagṛha at last, in accordance with the real intention of his having appeared in this world. The *Lotus Sūtra* overcame attachment to the three vehicles and clarified the one teaching and the principle that myriads of forms of goodness result in one effect of becoming a buddha. And it abandoned three vehicles as provisional teachings and expounded the one vehicle (the *Lotus Sūtra*) as the final teaching. It clarified "the great principle of cause and effect of the one vehicle," which Śākyamuni Buddha could not

period classification, but the names of the five-period classification are partly different from those given in the *Fahua xuanyi*, which are mentioned above. For example, the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics in the *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義 is called the teaching of the separate exposition of the three vehicles 三乘別教 in the *Sanlun xuanyi*; the formless teaching in the *Fahua xuanyi* is called the teaching of the common exposition of the three vehicles 三乘通教 in the *Sanlun xuanyi*; the teaching of that extols and disregards, censures and praises in the *Fahua xuanyi* is abbreviated to become the teaching that censures and praises 抑揚教 in the *Sanlun xuanyi*. The sūtras that correspond to the five teachings are common between both texts: the first teaching corresponds to the *Āgama* sūtras; the second teaching corresponds to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*; the third teaching corresponds to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*; the fourth teaching corresponds to the *Lotus Sūtra*; the fifth teaching corresponds to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

¹⁶ See Hiroshi Kanno, "Daihatsunehangyōjūge ni okeru sōryō no kyōhan shisō" in *Nanbokuchō zuidai ni okeru chūgoku bukkyō shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Daizō shuppan, 2012, pp. 445–452) and "Daihatsunehangyōjūge ni okeru sōshū no kyōhan shisō" in *Nanbokuchō zuidai ni okeru chūgoku bukkyō shisō no kenkyū* (ibid., pp. 465–474). Even though the taxonomy of Sengliang and Sengzong is not the same as Huiguan's five-period classification, the taxonomy of Sengzong is quite similar to that done by Huiguan. Based on the *Gaoseng zhuan* vol. 7 (T no. 2059, 50. 372b), Kōgaku Fuse has identified Sengliang as Shi Daoliang 釋道亮, who stayed at Beiduobao 北多寶 Monastery in the capital city. See Kōgaku Fuse, *Nehanshū no kenkyū*, part II (1942; reprinted in 1973, Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, pp. 232–240).

¹⁷ See *Xu gaoseng zhuan* vol. 5 (T no. 2060, 50. 463c17–18).

¹⁸ See T no. 1715, 33. 572c3–16.

expound immediately after having become enlightened. And as for its cause and effect, myriads of forms of goodness are regarded as the one cause, while the Buddha's immensely long lifespan, which is twice as long as the five hundred dust-particle *kalpas* (五百塵點劫), is regarded as the one effect.

As mentioned above, Fayun arranges the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha as a progression from three causes and three effects to one cause and one effect from the viewpoint of the theory of cause and effect on the basis of the "Skillful Means" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which arranges them as a progression from the three vehicles to the one vehicle. In summary, Fayun understood that even though the real intention of Śākyamuni Buddha was to clarify "the great principle of cause and effect of the one vehicle," the salvific faculties of sentient beings were not matured, and so he matured them through the three vehicles taught in Mṛgadāva, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. He finally clarified "the great principle of cause and effect of the one vehicle" in the *Lotus Sūtra* and accomplished his basic intention for appearing in this world. Fayun does not refer to the location of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* here, because his description might be restricted by the lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra*. As mentioned above, however, if Fayun adhered to the five-period taxonomy, he must have located the *Lotus Sūtra* in status below the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. I will examine whether there is any evidence of his adopting a five-period classification in the *Fahua yiji*, including the problem of the relationship between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

In the *Fahua yiji*, there are some expressions such as "five periods."¹⁹ Especially, where the contents of two kinds of wisdom, i.e., provisional wisdom and real wisdom in each sūtra of the five periods are explained, the names of the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* appear as the names of the sūtras of the five periods.²⁰ As mentioned above,²¹ the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics is consistent with the first teaching of five periods introduced in the *Fahua xuanyi* in terms of a name and an actual sūtra, and it seems to correspond to the *Āgama* sūtras.²² The term "the teaching of the separate exposition of the three vehicles," (*ibid.*, 593c8, 601c4, 603a21, 603b25, 611c12–13, 648b16) which is the first teaching of five periods introduced in the *Sanlun xuanyi*, also appears. As for the other four teachings, there is no reference to them except that the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* is defined as the common exposition of the three vehicles (*ibid.*, 639b18). As mentioned above,²³ in terms of nomenclature, the common exposition of the three vehicles is consistent with the second teaching of five periods introduced in the *Fahua xuanyi*.

In short, the particular sūtras that correspond to the teachings of five periods in the

¹⁹ See T no. 1715, 33. 574c6, 574c8, 582c6, 582c8, 615b17. Also see "sūtras of the five periods," (*ibid.*, 592b15) and "teachings of sūtras of the five periods" (*ibid.*, 660b23).

²⁰ See the *Fahua yiji* vol. 2 (T no. 1715, 33. 593c27–594a11).

²¹ See note 15.

²² The separate exposition of the three vehicles has two kinds of references. In the first case it signifies the *Āgama* sūtras expounded at Mṛgadāva (See T no. 1715, 33. 593c8) and in the second case it signifies the *Youpose jie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (*ibid.*, 611c12–14). As the *Fahua yiji* vol. 4 states, "The teachings of the separate exposition of the three vehicles were gradually expounded, as the four truths were taught at Mṛgadāva and the twelve links of dependent arising were taught in Rājagṛha, while the *Youpose jie jing* was taught later" (*ibid.*, 611c12–14).

²³ See note 15.

Fahua yiji are consistent with those of the *Fahua xuanyi* and the *Sanlun xuanyi*, but the names of the teaching that extols and disregards, censures and praises²⁴ (the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*), the teaching of equal reversion (the *Lotus Sūtra*), and the teaching of the eternal abiding (the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*) do not appear except the teaching that posits distinguishing characteristics and the teaching of the common exposition of the three vehicles.

However, as for the expression “equal reversion,” “the principle of equal reversion,” (*ibid.*, 572c15–16 and many other places) “the meaning of equal reversion,” (*ibid.*, 576a10–11 and many other places) “the law of equal reversion,” (*ibid.*, 605a29 and three other places) and “equal reversion of myriads of forms of goodness” (*ibid.*, 582b26 and five other places) appear in the text and represent the idea of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

In addition, as for the teaching of the eternal abiding, the *Fahua yiji* vol. 5 states, “This sūtra clarifies the *dharma-kāya*, which is not the same as the *dharma-kāya* clarified by the sūtra of the eternal abiding,” (T no. 1715, 33. 635c24–25) and the *Fahua yiji* vol. 7 states, “This [*Lotus Sūtra*] opens the way leading to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and becomes a preparation of the [teaching of the] eternal abiding” (*ibid.*, 660b26–27). Thus, it is obvious that Fayun defines the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* as the teaching of the eternal abiding. On the other hand, there is no reference to the teaching that extols and disregards, censures and praises, which refers to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. There is not even a trace of similar expressions. However, the later assessment that Fayun adopted the five-period classification seems to be reliable.

3. The Interpretation of the One Vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra*

As Fayun adopted the doctrinal classification that located the *Lotus Sūtra* in a status below the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, he did not give a high evaluation to the idea of the “age-old existence of Śākyamuni Buddha (久遠釋尊)” explained in the *Lotus Sūtra*’s 16th “The Lifespan of the Thus Come One” chapter but did value the idea of the “one vehicle” that was the center of the second “Skillful Means” chapter. Here I will introduce Fayun’s thought on the one vehicle. Further, he showed by the segmentation of the *Lotus Sūtra* that the idea of the “one vehicle” is expounded not only in the second chapter, but also in the *Lotus Sūtra* in its entirety. If we accept this conclusion in advance, the important framework for interpreting the one vehicle is the theory of provisional wisdom and real wisdom and the theory of cause and effect. Passages featuring these ideas appear at the beginning of the annotation of the “Skillful Means” chapter. Concerning the problem of why the second chapter is not titled “true aspect” but “skillful means,” the doctrinal contents of this chapter are simply arranged

²⁴ There is one place where the *Fahua yiji* locates the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* in Śākyamuni Buddha’s career (T no. 1715, 33. 639c25–27). In addition, the *Fahua yiji* does not refer to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at all. Therefore, Fayun does not incorporate it in his doctrinal classification. As Sengzong annotates in the *Da ban niepan jing jijie* vol. 9, “At one time [the Buddha] expounded the expansion of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at eight assemblies in seven different places” (T no. 1763, 37. 415c9), he refers to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Compared to Sengzong’s treatment of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the fact that Fayun does not refer to it is somewhat odd. Also, as the *Fahua yiji* (S. 2733 + S. 4102, discovered in Dunhuang) states, “[When these sentient beings] see me (the Buddha) for the first time and listen to my preaching, [they] immediately believe and accept it, entering into the wisdom of Tathāgata’ at the assembly of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. This means entering into the wisdom of the Buddha of eternal abiding Mahāyāna” (T no. 2748, 85. 179a6–8). This text sees the preaching of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (T no. 262, 9. 40b8–9). Considering the above-cited texts, the fact that Fayun does not refer to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at all seems to be one of the characteristics of Fayun’s *Fahua yiji*. See Hiroshi Kanno, “Hōun Hokkegiki to tonkō shahon Hokkegiki” in *Chūgoku Hokke shisō no kenkyū* (*ibid.*, pp. 235–244).

as follows.

In the case of naming [the chapter] from the standpoint of the principle, it should be named the chapter on the true aspect 實相 and should not be named the chapter on skillful means. Now only this sūtra (the *Lotus Sūtra*) straightforwardly clarifies that the past three vehicles are provisional. As for the skillful means, the three vehicles were originally true in the past and were not named skillful means. As long as it expounds the principle of the true aspect of the one vehicle now, this shows by a comparison that the three vehicles are provisional. For this the sūtra later states, “This sūtra opens the gate of skillful means and shows the true aspect.” This means that when the true aspect of the present cause and effect is expounded, the fact that the past cause and effect is not true is clarified. Now from the standpoint of what is clarified this chapter is named [the chapter on] skillful means (T no. 1715, 33. 592a12–19).

Even though this passage seems to merely show a common-sense explanation of the idea of the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra*, if we are more careful, we can find that the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* is identified with “the principle of the true aspect” as is shown in the expression of “the principle of the true aspect of the one vehicle.” Furthermore, the comparison between the three vehicles and the one vehicle is made from the standpoint of cause and effect as is shown in the expression “present cause and effect” and “past cause and effect.” As for “the principle of the true aspect,” the true aspect is expressed as the principle, which is used as a relative concept to “the teaching” as in the following citation:

The meaning of skillful means is skillful function. This is a teaching expounded by the wisdom based on the skillful means of the Tathāgata, which is called a gate. A true aspect is the principle expounded by the real wisdom of the Tathāgata (*ibid.*, 592a19–21).

The teaching expounded by the wisdom based on the skillful means of the Buddha is the three vehicles, which are skillful means, while the principle expounded by the Buddha’s real wisdom is the true aspect. There are not three kinds of principle in the ground of the three vehicles. They are defined as the teachings expressed by words, while the one vehicle has one principle as its ground. Therefore, as the one vehicle is regarded as “the principle of the true aspect of the one vehicle,” it is defined as an explanation of one principle.

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the annotation of the “Skillful Means” chapter there appear the interpretations from the standpoint of the Buddha’s provisional wisdom, which is identical with the wisdom based on skillful means in the above-mentioned citation, and the theory of cause and effect concerning three vehicles and one vehicle. I will examine these two standpoints.

3.1 The Theory of Provisional Wisdom and Real Wisdom, and the Interpretation of One Vehicle

Fayun clarifies that there is real wisdom (實智) and the wisdom based on skillful means (方便智) and that real wisdom has two names, i.e., real wisdom and wisdom (智慧) and that the wisdom based on skillful means has also two names, i.e., the wisdom based on skillful means and provisional wisdom (權智).²⁵ The wisdom based on skillful means signifies the skillful function possessed by the sage. Thus, the wisdom of the sage is characterized as skillful means, which means skillful function, and is named the wisdom based on skillful means.

²⁵ See T no. 1715, 33. 592b16–18.

Therefore, it is “named from the standpoint of essence (當體受名).” On the other hand, as provisional wisdom is “named from the standpoint of the object (從境得名)” of the wisdom and is one that cognizes provisional object of three vehicles; it is named the provisional wisdom.²⁶

Next, as for the significance of the combination of wisdom and real wisdom, the former signifies “mind’s function of illuminating objects (心用鑒照)” and the latter means that there is no “falseness.” Wisdom and real wisdom are the same wisdom, but they are named differently, like the combination of the wisdom based on skillful means and provisional wisdom. Wisdom is named from the standpoint of essence like the wisdom based on skillful means, while real wisdom is named from the standpoint of the object of the wisdom like provisional wisdom. In other words, as mentioned above, wisdom signifies mind’s function of illuminating objects and its function itself is named wisdom. As Fayun states, “Now the principle of cause and effect of the one vehicle is a real and established object in the world (天下真實定境),” real wisdom cognizes real objects and so it is named from the standpoint of its objects.²⁷ In sum, the wisdom based on skillful means and simple wisdom are named from the standpoint of essence, while provisional wisdom and real wisdom are named from the standpoint of the object.

Next, Fayun explains the objects of provisional wisdom and real wisdom. First, he states concerning the objects of provisional wisdom as follows.

There are three three-fold objects altogether in the objects illuminated by the wisdom based on skillful means: the first is three teachings; the second is three salvific faculties; the third is three kinds of people. [The wisdom based on skillful means] illuminates the three three-fold objects. You should know that this wisdom is the essence of provisional wisdom. There were three kinds of people in the past. There were three kinds of people, people have three faculties, and the three faculties received three teachings. For this reason as long as the Tathāgata illuminates the three three-fold objects by provisional wisdom, he immediately expounds three teachings, responding to three faculties and cultivates three kinds of people. And so this wisdom is examined and selected by these three three-fold objects. You should know that to illuminate these three three-fold objects is the essence of the wisdom based on skillful means (*ibid.*, 592c27–593a5).

According to this citation, “objects of provisional wisdom” is interpreted as “three three-fold objects,” which means three teachings, three faculties and three persons. Three teachings signify the *śrāvaka-yāna*, *pratyekabuddha-yāna*, and *bodhisattva-yāna*. Three faculties are spiritual or religious conditions of sentient beings, who receive three teachings of the Buddha, such as conditions of receiving *śrāvaka-yāna*, those of receiving *pratyekabuddha-yāna* and those of receiving *bodhisattva-yāna*. “Faculty” signifies sentient beings’ spiritual or religious conditions, which elicit the appearance and teaching activities of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and cause sentient beings to be receptive to them. “Three kinds of people” means *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*. As for the reason why faculty and person are purposely distinguished, it is probably because there are not eternally unchanging and fixed discriminations among three persons such as *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva* and they are beings defined by the faculty of *śrāvaka*, of *pratyekabuddha*, and of *bodhisattva*. *Śrāvakas* will become *bodhisattvas* and *bodhisattvas* will become *śrāvakas* on the basis of

²⁶. See *ibid.*, 592b24–29.

²⁷. See *ibid.*, 592c3–15.

change in faculties. Therefore faculty and kinds of people should be clearly distinguished. In sum, the provisional wisdom of the Buddha is one that teaches three vehicles, *śrāvaka-yāna*, *pratyekabuddha-yāna*, and *bodhisattva-yāna* in response to three faculties and cultivates three kinds of people. In other words, this provisional wisdom has the function of illuminating three teachings, three faculties and three persons.

On the other hand, Fayun states, concerning the object of real wisdom:

In the objects illuminated by real wisdom, there are altogether four kinds: the first is oneness/unity of teaching; the second is oneness of principle; the third is oneness of faculty; the fourth is oneness of person. It is clarified that Tathāgata's wisdom illuminates the objects of these four kinds of oneness. This is none other than real wisdom. What is called oneness of teaching and oneness of principle is that [the *Lotus Sūtra*] advocates now that there are no differing thrusts of causes and no differing effective trajectories (因無異趣果無別從). And as for the meaning of the truth, there is no second in its principle. And so as long as the principle that is clarified is one, how can the teaching, which clarifies [the principle], be two? What is called oneness of faculty means that there exists one kind of faculty in the audiences at the assembly of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which receives one effect. Oneness of person means to clarify that the people who were formerly *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* today changed their minds to become bodhisattvas. The sūtra later states, "[The Buddha] cultivates only bodhisattvas and there are no disciples who are *śrāvakas*." Also, it is said that one person has one faculty and receives one teaching and one principle. The Tathāgata expounds one principle by one teaching and responds to one faculty and cultivates one kind of people. For this reason, to illuminate the object of these four kinds of oneness by the Tathāgata's wisdom is none other than the essence of real wisdom (*ibid.*, 593a5–17).

In sum, the essence of real wisdom is "the object of four kinds of oneness," which signifies oneness of teaching, oneness of principle, oneness of faculty, and oneness of person. If the principle is one, the teaching that should clarify it should be one. There appeared the expression "the principle of the true aspect of one vehicle" above. If we apply this thinking to this topic, what clarifies oneness of principle is the one vehicle, and oneness of teaching indicates an aspect expounded by words concerning the one vehicle, which clarifies oneness of principle. In other words, the one vehicle has two aspects, oneness of principle and oneness of teaching. Oneness of faculty means the faculty that realizes Buddha-effect, while oneness of person signifies bodhisattva. Speaking from the perspective of sentient beings, they who have faculties of realizing Buddha-effect, i. e., bodhisattvas, receive one teaching and principle, while speaking from the perspective of the Buddha, he expounds one principle by one teaching and responds to the faculty of realizing Buddha-effect, cultivating bodhisattvas. In sum, an aspect of Buddha's wisdom, which has such a function, is called real wisdom.

Comparing the object of provisional wisdom and that of real wisdom, three categories such as teaching, faculty, and person are common in both, but three principles are not shown in the object of provisional wisdom, even though oneness of principle is shown as the object of real wisdom. Fayun discussed this problem and clarified as a conclusion that both when three vehicles were expounded in the past and when the one vehicle is expounded now, the principle is consistently one from beginning to end. When the Buddha expounded the three vehicles in the past, there were not three principles. He tried to clarify today's "principle of

one truth” by means of the three vehicles.²⁸

In sum, Fayun tried to interpret the problem of the relationship between three vehicles and one vehicle in the *Lotus Sūtra* from the standpoint of two aspects of Buddha’s wisdom, which are provisional wisdom and real wisdom. Provisional wisdom is the one that expounds three vehicles to three persons possessing three faculties, while real wisdom is the one that expounds the one vehicle, which is oneness of teaching and oneness of principle, to one kind of people possessing one faculty. Three faculties and three kinds of people finally convert to one faculty and one person, respectively and the one vehicle is expounded for him or her. The three vehicles in the past are assumed to be provisional and temporary until the one vehicle is clarified.

These characteristics of Fayun’s interpretation can be arranged as follows: (a) the three vehicles and one vehicle are both based on forms of the Buddha’s wisdom; (b) the three vehicles, however, are based on provisional wisdom and the one vehicle is based on real wisdom and so the grounds of formation of the three vehicles and one vehicle are distinguished; (c) Fayun clarifies that even though oneness of principle is shown as the object of real wisdom, three principles are not expounded as the objects of provisional wisdom, by which he indicates that the three vehicles are provisional and finally disappear before the one vehicle that expounds oneness of principle; (d) by taking up not only person but also faculty, sentient beings are regarded not as fixed but as transformative by change of faculty, which coincides with the idea of the *Lotus Sūtra* that *śrāvakas* become bodhisattvas to become enlightened.

3.2 The Theory of Cause and Effect and the Interpretation of One Vehicle

Next I will introduce Fayun’s theory of cause and effect. When he interpreted the *Lotus Sūtra*, he primarily valued the theory of cause and effect. It is not an exaggeration to say that the central teaching of Buddhism is none other than the principle of cause and effect. What is called “cause and effect” here is the cause of Buddhist practice and the effect of religious ideal that should be realized as a result of that practice. Buddhism is not mere philosophy or theory, rather it has a practice and a goal that should be reached by that practice. The doctrines of Buddhism were indeed formed for such a practice and goal.

As introduced above, when Fayun arranged the instructional content of Śākyamuni Buddha’s career at the beginning of the *Fahua yiji*, he used this theory of cause and effect as a framework for his arrangement. This reflects the view that the *Lotus Sūtra* itself arranges the Buddha’s preaching career as a progression from the three vehicles to the one vehicle. Further, Fayun takes up the three vehicles and the one vehicle from his own standpoint of the theory of cause and effect. He proposed a doctrinal classification that arranges the Buddha’s teachings as a progression from three causes and three effects to one cause and one effect.

Such an arrangement of the instructional content of Śākyamuni Buddha’s career is applied to the interpretation of the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*. *Fa* (法) of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* (妙法蓮華經) is interpreted as cause and effect, while *lianhua* (蓮華) is interpreted as a metaphor of subtle cause and effect.²⁹ This is Fayun’s unique interpretation, one which does not appear in Daosheng’s interpretation of the title of the sūtra, and which had significant

²⁸. See *ibid.*, 593a17–29.

²⁹. See *ibid.*, 573a4–8.

influence on later exegetes. Here I will consider the issue that *fa* is interpreted as cause and effect.

Subtlety (*miao* 妙) is a concept relative to coarseness (*cu* 麤) and the modifying word to *fa*. *Fa* means cause and effect. Therefore, *miaofa* (subtle law) signifies subtle cause and subtle effect. In other words, cause is subtle and effect is subtle. Compared to this cause and effect of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the cause and effect preached prior to the *Lotus Sūtra* was coarse. Actually, the cause is practice of the six *pāramitās*, while the effect, which is realized through such a practice, has both conditioned effect and unconditioned effect. The unconditioned effect means to sever delimited *saṃsāra* (分段生死) in the three realms and the function of conditioned effect means to save sentient beings abiding in this world for either eighty years or seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*.³⁰ These causes and effects are defined as non-ultimate.

On the other hand, the subtle cause of the *Lotus Sūtra* makes myriads of forms of goodness one cause and enables sentient beings to transcend a stretch of steep road five hundred *yojanas* long and reaches the place of treasure. The subtle effect, on the other hand, is the unconditioned effect of leaving delimited *saṃsāra* inside the three realms and *saṃsāra* of inconceivable transformation (不思議變易生死) outside the three realms. This is a function of conditioned effect, which prolongs a lifespan by supernatural power out of unlimited compassion and saves the sentient beings of the three realms. Such causes and effects are called the subtle law.

As observed above, the coarse causes and effects of the past are compared with the subtle causes and effects of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Fayun further discusses this problem in detail. He carries out a comparison of the past cause and the present cause from three standpoints. I will omit quotation of the material and introduce the essential points.³¹ As for the first, the length of the essence of cause, the past cause means practice inside the three realms (short), while the present cause means practice inside and outside the three realms and the myriads of forms of goodness (long). As for the second, the width of the meaning of cause, the past cause means only the practice of the six *pāramitās* (narrow), while the present cause is to practice myriad forms of goodness and merit (broad). As for the third, superiority and inferiority of the function of cause, the past cause is only to sever the four entrenched afflictions³² and does not sever the nescience entrenchment (inferior), while the present cause severs not only the four entrenched afflictions but also severs the nescience entrenchment (superior).

Next, Fayun also compares the past effect and the present effect in three ways. The first is the length of the essence of effect. The past effect is the short lifespan that is the Buddha's lifespan of either eighty years or seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*, while the present effect

³⁰. See T no. 642, 15. 645a2–5.

³¹. See T no. 1715, 33. 573a15–c19. It is well known that a detailed critique of Fayun's interpretation introduced here appears in vol. 2A of the *Fahua xuanyi* (T no. 1716, 33. 691b29–692c3).

³². These are the four entrenchments (四住地) of mental disturbances (惑), derived from the explication of the nature of affliction given in the *Śrīmālā-sūtra*. The entrenchments are: (1) entrenchment of mistaken views in regard to all things in the three realms (見一處住地); (2) entrenchment of attachment to objects in the desire realm (欲愛住); (3) entrenchment of attachment to things in the form realm (色愛住地); (4) entrenchment of attachment to objects in the formless realm (有愛住地). When the nescience entrenchment (無明住地) is added, there are five entrenchments (五住地惑), which condition all error, and are the ground from which spring the roots of the countless afflictions and delusions of all sentient beings.

is the long lifespan, which is twice as long as the five hundred dust-particle *kalpas*. The second is the width of the meaning of effect. As the past unconditioned effect only emancipates from delimited *saṃsāra*, it is not perfect, while the present effect, which emancipates from both delimited *saṃsāra* and the *saṃsāra* of inconceivable transformation, is perfect. The past conditioned effect is not perfect in merit and wisdom. As for merit, compassion covers the sentient beings of the three realms but does not cover those outside the three realms. The wisdom illuminates only the limited four truths (有量四諦), but does not illuminate the unlimited four truths (無量四諦), while it illuminates only three causes and three effects, but does not illuminate one cause and one effect. Therefore, there is only eradication wisdom (盡智) and wisdom of non-arising (無生智). As for the conditioned effect, its merits widely affect sentient beings inside and outside the three realms, while its wisdom illuminates both the limited four truths and the unlimited four truths, and further illuminates one cause and one effect. The third way is the superiority and inferiority of the function of effect. The past effect is inferior because the quantity of preaching is low, while the present effect is superior in manifesting embodied buddhas not only on Vulture Peak but also widely in ten directions, and saves sentient beings by supernatural power.

Thus, Fayun compares past cause and effect with present cause and effect from three perspectives. He clarifies their coarseness and subtlety, and shows that the *Lotus Sūtra* is subtle. Even though the *Fahua yiji* introduces another interpretation, I will not discuss it here.³³

Fayun, who regards the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* as one cause and one effect and regards the past cause and effect as coarse and regards the present cause and effect of the *Lotus Sūtra* as subtle, clarifies the relationship between this theory of cause and effect and the entire *Lotus Sūtra* as follows. He makes a classification of the thematic thrust (宗) of sūtras into three cases: the first is sūtras that make cause their thematic thrust; the second is sūtras that make effect their thematic thrust; the third is sūtras that make both cause and effect their thematic thrust. And he points out that the *Lotus Sūtra* is the sūtra that makes both cause and effect its thematic thrust:

Now, this *Lotus Sūtra* makes cause and effect its thematic thrust. The former part [of the *Lotus Sūtra*] before the “Peaceful Practices” chapter elaborates the three to reveal the one and clarifies the meaning of cause, while the latter part after the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter elaborates the near to reveal the distant and clarifies the meaning of effect (*ibid.*, 574b16–18).

Further, according to his interpretation, how does the *Lotus Sūtra*, which expounds both cause and effect, actually explain this cause and effect in the three sections of one sūtra such as “preface,” “main discourse,” and “dissemination”? The “preface” section is a preparation for the “main discourse” section and does not have direct relation with cause and effect. However, Fayun states in the annotation of the auspicious signs of the “Introduction” chapter:

[The auspicious signs] clarify that the practitioners of the three vehicles equally return to becoming buddhas in order to explicitly explain the principle of one cause and one effect (*ibid.*, 582b22–23).

³³. See T no. 1715, 33. 573c9–26.

Thus, he frequently points out the relationship between the “preface” section and one cause and one effect.

Fayun understands that the “main discourse” section is divided into two sections and each section explains cause and effect. In other words, the part from the “Skillful Means” chapter to the “Peaceful Practices” chapter clarifies the meaning of cause, while the part from the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter to the verses of measuring benefits of the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter clarifies the meaning of effect.³⁴

As for the “dissemination” section, Fayun states:

[The “dissemination” section] will make this subtle law of cause and effect of one vehicle spread to distant places to people who have not heard it, and not disappear for one thousand years (*ibid.*, 575a12–13).

In other words, disseminating the subtle law of cause and effect, which is explained in the “main discourse” section, is the explanation of “dissemination.”

As for the relationship between the theory of provisional wisdom and real wisdom and the theory of cause and effect, Fayun clarifies their difference by making the three vehicles and the one vehicle expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* be based on the provisional wisdom and real wisdom of the Buddha. It is said that provisional wisdom cognizes three three-fold objects, while real wisdom cognizes the object of four kinds of oneness. Fayun regards the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* as one cause and one effect on the basis of the interpretation that oneness of principle is defined as the principle of one cause and one effect. Further, he regards one cause and one effect as subtle cause and subtle effect through the interpretation of the title of the sūtra, and he analyzes the difference between subtle cause and subtle effect of the *Lotus Sūtra* and three causes and three effects of pre-*Lotus Sūtra* teachings, which are coarse cause and coarse effect. In other words, Fayun uses the theory of cause and effect in order to clarify the position of the *Lotus Sūtra* among teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha. Furthermore, it clarifies the Buddha’s wisdom (provisional wisdom and real wisdom), which is the agent of expounding teachings. In this way, he clarifies the ground of the Buddha, who expounds subtle cause and subtle effect (one cause and one effect) and coarse cause and coarse effect (three causes and three effects). Also, Fayun explains that the idea of one vehicle, which means this cause and effect (one cause and one effect) is not explained only in the “Skillful Means” chapter but also throughout the entire *Lotus Sūtra*. He indicates concretely how it is expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* through his analytic division of the text.

Thus, Fayun’s interpretation of the thought of one vehicle is made from the viewpoint of the theory of cause and effect, and the principle of one cause and one effect is based on Buddha’s real wisdom. As for one cause and one effect, he states:

To clarify oneness of effect is none other than to finally bring together the three effects of the past to perfect the one effect of the present....To clarify oneness of cause means that if practices of practitioners of three vehicles of the past are brought together, there is only one cause corresponding to one Buddha-effect (*ibid.*, 603a19–23).

In other words, the three causes of practices of the past—*śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*—become one cause, which finally perfects one Buddha-effect, while the three

³⁴. See *ibid.*, 575a23–b2.

effects of the past—*arhat*, *pratyekabuddha*, and Buddha—finally become one Buddha-effect. Such an understanding of the thought of the *Lotus Sūtra* is shown in the three sections of the *Lotus Sūtra* segmented by Daosheng.³⁵ Fayun discovers in the “law” of the sūtra’s title the theory of cause and effect, which arranges the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha’s career and expresses exactly the thought of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Furthermore, he re-develops Daosheng’s interpretation by explaining the theory of Buddha’s two kinds of wisdom of provisional and real, which supports the theory of cause and effect.

4. The Theory of the Impermanent Existence of Buddha’s Body in the *Lotus Sūtra*

As mentioned above, Fayun interpreted the *Lotus Sūtra* based on the doctrinal classification that located the *Lotus Sūtra* in status below the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and so it seems that he valued the idea of the “one vehicle” explained in the “Skillful Means” chapter and did not evaluate highly the idea of the “age-old existence of the Buddha” explained in the “The Lifespan of the Thus Come One” chapter. Here I will examine how he understood the relationship between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

A feature of the five-period taxonomy is that the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is regarded as superior in status to the *Lotus Sūtra* because it expounds the eternal abiding of Buddha’s body—which we can easily understand from the fact that the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is named “the teaching of eternal abiding.” In the *Fahua yiji*, a comparison between the two sūtras was also carried out concerning this eternal abiding of Buddha’s body. Fayun explains this problem with an innovative metaphor in the *Fahua yiji* vol. 2:

As for the meaning of longevity expounded in this sūtra [the *Lotus Sūtra*], the lifespan of seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* as explained in the past [such as in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi Sūtra*] is regarded as short, while [the lifespan expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, which is] twice the length [of its past duration from the time of becoming enlightened to now], is called long, which is in terms of position. If so, there is not a special length now. Anything beyond a lifespan of seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* is simply regarded as long. Using a simile, a post of five *zhang* 丈³⁶ has two *zhang* of that post concealed beneath the surface and the three *zhang* exposed. We see the three *zhang* and regard the post as short. When the additional two *zhang* are revealed, the meaning of long appears. However, there is no set length. When the present two *zhang* [of base of the post] is added to the past three *zhang*, the function of five *zhang* appears. [The Buddha’s] lifespan is also like this. The past lifespan of seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* is regarded as short, while twice that length is regarded as long. However, there is no set length. It just extends a short one to form a long one. This is not different from saying that three *zhang* is short and coarse, while the present double length is long and subtle (*ibid.*, 573c26–574a5).

As for the meaning of the longevity expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, Fayun illustrates his point with a readily apprehended simile. A post of five *zhang* is standing in soil, so that two *zhang* of that post is concealed beneath the surface. The three *zhang* that are exposed correspond to the lifespan of seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*. But when the soil is removed and the additional two *zhang* of the base of the post is revealed, its length adds up to five *zhang*. That

³⁵ Daosheng broadly divides the text of the *Lotus Sūtra* into the three sections of “assimilating the three causal paths to the one cause,” “assimilating the three fruits or results [of the three paths]” to the “one fruit or result,” and “assimilating the three kinds of people or practitioners” [of the three paths] to the “one kind of person or practitioner.” See Daosheng’s commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*, X27, no. 577, p. 1, c14–17.

³⁶ One *zhang* is approximately equal to ten feet.

length corresponds to the lifespan of the Buddha as revealed in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Thus the difference between earlier and later representations of the lifespan of the Buddha is no more than the difference between three or five *zhang*—it remains purely a relative matter. If we look at this situation from the perspective of the eternity of the Buddha as taught in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, we can only conclude that, in the *Lotus Sūtra*, the existence of the Buddha is still presented as impermanent.³⁷

The idea that “[the lifespan will last] twice the number of years that have already passed” appears in another place, which reads:

If we discuss this from the viewpoint of the principle, as long as two kinds of *saṃsāra* are transcended it must be eternal abiding nirvāṇa. Now this teaching [of the *Lotus Sūtra*], however, does not clarify this principle and so “[the lifespan lasting] twice the number of years as have already passed” is called nirvāṇa (*ibid.*, 624c6–7).

According to this citation, if we transcend the two kinds of *saṃsāra*, delimited *saṃsāra* and *saṃsāra* of inconceivable transformation, we can surely acquire eternal abiding nirvāṇa, but as the *Lotus Sūtra* does not expound this principle, and the finite Buddha’s lifespan, which is twice as long as the five hundred dust-particle *kalpas*, is regarded as nirvāṇa, the *Lotus Sūtra* does not teach the eternally abiding nirvāṇa. Further, the meaning of *dharma-kāya*, which Fayun understands to be expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, is explained as follows:

The *dharma-kāya* expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* is not eternally abiding. Here are two interpretations. The first is that [the Buddha] who extends the adamantine mind and abides in this world for a long time is *dharma-kāya*. [The second] is that as the fact that buddhas of the ten directions see each other from afar has just been clarified, it is known that the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is now teaching in his western world and does not come here (*sahā*-world). Seeing from here, he [the Buddha of Immeasurable Life] is none other than the *dharma-kāya*. However, the response body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*) originally has form and image. The *dharma-kāya* does not have form or image. As long as the Buddha does not come here, there is neither form nor image. Such a Buddha is none other than the *dharma-kāya*. If he comes here and manifests himself, the Buddha who manifests himself is none other than the response body. Seeing from there, [the Buddha] here is regarded as *dharma-kāya* (*ibid.*, 629a6–13).

According to this citation, the *dharma-kāya* expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* is one who uses his supernatural power to extend his adamantine mind and abide in this world,³⁸ or one who is a response body in other worlds like the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, because he does not have form or image.³⁹ “Adamantine mind” means a solid mind like a diamond and usually means the highest state of mind of a bodhisattva. Here it is the mind necessary to continue to abide in this world without entering nirvāṇa without remainder. Thus, the *dharma-kāya* expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* is different from the eternal abiding *dharma-kāya* expounded in

^{37.} Jizang picks up Fayun’s theory concerning the impermanent existence of Buddha’s body in the *Lotus Sūtra* in the *Fahua xuanlun* vol. 2 (T no. 1720, 34. 372a17–23).

^{38.} See T no. 1715, 33. 572c25–573a1.

^{39.} As for regarding Buddha of Immeasurable Life as *dharma-kāya*, see *ibid.*, 638c14–15. Also, regarding embodied buddhas as *dharma-kāya*, see *ibid.*, 638c14–15. In addition, for research on Fayun’s theory of Buddha’s body, see Senshō Kimura, “Hōun no busshin setsu” in *Bukkyō gaku seminā* 16, 1972 (also in *Chūgoku bukkyō shisō kenkyū*, Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2009, pp. 164–179) and Akiya Murakami, “Zuitō bukkyō ni okeru Hokekyō no busshin setsu: Hōun no “jippō sōmō setsu” ni taisuru chigi to kichizō no hanron,” in *Higashi ajia bukkyō kenkyū* 12 (2014, pp. 69–87).

the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. As for this point, Fayun states clearly:

This sūtra clarifies the *dharma-kāya*, which is not the same as the one that the sūtra of the eternal abiding clarifies (*ibid.*, 635c24–25).

Thus, Fayun did not regard the age-old Śākyamuni Buddha expounded in the “Lifespan” chapter as the true eternal abiding expounded in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

5. Conclusion

This paper explicates Fayun’s view of the *Lotus Sūtra*. It is summarized in the following eight points.

1. Fayun gave a detailed analytic breakdown of the entire text of the *Lotus Sūtra* on the basis of his detailed research on it and exerted a great influence on future commentaries.
2. As the *Fahua yiji* is a record of Fayun’s lectures on the *Lotus Sūtra*, there are few references to the Mahāyāna *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. The view of later scholars that Fayun adopted the five-period doctrinal classification might be correct. Fayun’s position that the *Lotus Sūtra* was inferior in status to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is found in the *Fahua yiji*.
3. As Fayun adopted the doctrinal classification that evaluated most highly the true eternity of the Buddha expounded in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, he did not highly evaluate the idea of the “age-old existence of the Buddha” expounded in the “Life Span” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but did value the idea of the “one vehicle” expounded in the “Skillful Means” chapter. Further, he showed by his breakdown of the *Lotus Sūtra* that the idea of “one vehicle” is expounded not only in the second chapter, but also throughout the *Lotus Sūtra*.
4. When Fayun interpreted the idea of “one vehicle,” he valued the theory of provisional wisdom and real wisdom and the theory of cause and effect as frameworks for the interpretation of the one vehicle.
5. The theory of provisional wisdom and real wisdom shows that three vehicles and one vehicle are both based on forms of the Buddha’s wisdom, i.e., provisional wisdom and real wisdom, respectively, and distinguishes the ground of formation of the three vehicles from that of the one vehicle.
6. Fayun showed the essence of the idea of one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* as one cause and one effect, which is subtle cause and subtle effect, and took up a comparison between it and the three causes and three effects, which are coarse cause and coarse effect expounded in the teachings before the *Lotus Sūtra*.
7. The theory of cause and effect is an interpretation about an aspect of teachings expounded by the Buddha. Furthermore, it clarifies the Buddha’s wisdom (provisional wisdom and real wisdom), which is the agent of expounding teachings. In this way, he clarifies the ground of the Buddha, which expounds subtle cause and subtle effect (one cause and one effect) and coarse cause and coarse effect (three causes and three effects).
8. Fayun did not think that the “age-old existence of the Buddha” expounded in the “Lifespan” chapter is the true eternity of the Buddha expounded in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.